

Creating a Hand Map

In *Writing as a Road to Self-Discovery*, Barry Lane describes the use of a hand map as a prewriting technique to help writers bring memories to a conscious level. We have adapted this technique for use with students.

Hook: Find a favorite personal narrative that has a large emotional impact on your target grade level. The first chapter of *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White works well for intermediate grade levels (3–6). Students can easily name Fern's emotions and/or character traits that are revealed through her dialogue and actions. Options: *Crab Moon* by Ruth Horowitz, *Shortcut* by Donald Crews, *Fireflies!* by Julie Brinckloe, *I Remember Papa* by Helen Kettermann, "Mrs. Buell" in *Hey World, Here I Am!* by Jean Little.

Purpose: *Do you remember when we read Fireflies!? What was the character feeling at the beginning of the story? How did he feel when he realized the fireflies would die if he didn't release them? What was he feeling at the end of the story? (List the emotions on the board as the students name them.) Can you see how much of this story depends on the emotions of the main character and how they changed during the telling of it? When we are trying to write about specific topics, sometimes it is easier to find an important topic—something you really want to write about—if you start with an emotion or one of your character traits. Today I am going to model how to use a hand map to find a specific topic.*

Brainstorm: In whole group, students make a list of emotions after they have had a chance to "turn and talk" with a partner. This list can become part of a writing binder or a writer's notebook entry. At some point in time, create a list of character traits. A hand map can use emotions or character traits or a combination of both. It is probably easiest to start with the emotions.

Model: Share your own hand map with your students. (See the model for the hand map in Figure 3.3 that Lynne shares with her students.) Start with basic emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, happiness, and excitement. Place one on each finger after tracing your hand on the board or on chart paper with fingers spread wide apart. From each finger, extend lines to connect to examples of times you felt that way. Try to think of one example for each emotion, but tell